

## **The school and the UN agenda 2030: Promoting sustainability, combating poverty, and reducing inequalities**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2021 highlights education in times of crisis, analyzing how educational systems around the world have responded to the challenges posed by recent events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall objective of this report is to assess the impact of crises on education and provide insights into policies and practices that can help address these challenges. Throughout the article, various analyses are presented, addressing topics such as access to education, equity, quality of teaching, educational financing, and specific challenges faced by vulnerable groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, and refugees. The article also emphasizes the importance of education as a fundamental human right and as an essential tool for sustainable development. One of the main conclusions of this work is that crises, whether sanitary, economic, or environmental, can have a significant impact on education, exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and hindering access to learning for many students. However, opportunities for innovation and transformation are also identified, such as accelerating the digitization of education and strengthening partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector. In summary, the article highlights the urgent need for policies and investments that ensure equitable access to quality education for all, especially in times of crisis. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of global collaboration and international solidarity in seeking effective and sustainable solutions to the educational challenges faced by humanity.

**Keywords:** Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO, Education in times of crisis, Access to education, Equity, Quality of education, Educational funding, Vulnerable groups, Sustainable development, Educational inequalities, Educational innovation, Digitization of education, Global partnerships.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda sets out a series of ambitious and interconnected goals, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Among these goals, those focused on quality education (SDG 4), poverty reduction (SDG 1) and the reduction of inequalities (SDG 10) stand out. Schools play a crucial role in achieving these goals by acting as catalysts for change and promoting sustainable and inclusive practices. Education is widely recognized as an essential tool for sustainable development. According to the UN, "education is a fundamental human right and essential to the enjoyment of all other human rights. It promotes individual freedom and empowerment and generates

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important benefits for development" (UNESCO, 2015). In this context, schools must be reimagined to not only impart knowledge, but also to instill values of sustainability and equity.

In addition, poverty remains one of the biggest global challenges, and education is seen as one of the most effective solutions to its eradication. According to the World Bank's "Ending Poverty" report, "education improves people's skills and capabilities, increases productivity and income, and enables a dignified and productive life" (World Bank, 2018). Therefore, the inclusion of educational strategies that directly address poverty is vital for the creation of more just and equitable societies. Inequality, both economic and social, represents a significant obstacle to sustainable development. The UN highlights that "inequality in all its forms is a central challenge for development, affecting social cohesion and economic well-being" (UNDP, 2019). Schools, as microcosms of society, have the potential to model inclusive and equitable behaviors, promoting equity from the ground up.

## THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global action plan adopted by all Member States of the United Nations (UN) in September 2015. This plan sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets, which aim to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.



Source: ComCiencia

## MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE 2030 AGENDA

The 17 SDGs are comprehensive and interconnected, covering a vast array of social, economic, and environmental issues. They include:

- **Poverty Eradication:** End poverty in all its forms and in all places.



- **Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture:** End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- **Health and Well-being:** Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, at all ages.
- **Quality Education:** Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **Gender Equality:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **Drinking Water and Sanitation:** Ensure the availability and sustainable management of safe drinking water and sanitation for all.
- **Affordable and Clean Energy:** Ensuring reliable, sustainable, modern and affordable access to energy for all.
- **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- **Reducing Inequalities:** Reducing inequality within and between countries.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- **Responsible Consumption and Production:** Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- **Action against Global Climate Change:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- **Life Below Water:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- **Life on Land:** Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- **Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- **Partnerships and Means of Implementation:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.



## **THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THE SDGS**

The SDGs are interdependent; Progress on one goal often drives progress on others. For example, improving education (SDG 4) can lead to poverty reduction (SDG 1) and the promotion of gender equality (SDG 5). Similarly, action to combat climate change (SDG 13) can help conserve life in water (SDG 14) and on land (SDG 15).

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires cooperation between governments, the private sector, civil society and citizens. The UN provides a global indicator framework to monitor progress on the SDGs, allowing countries to track their performance and identify areas that need further attention. Periodic reporting and voluntary national reviews are essential tools for transparency and accountability.

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The 2030 Agenda presents both challenges and opportunities. Eradicating extreme poverty, reducing inequalities and addressing climate change require profound changes in global policies and practices. However, this agenda also offers a unique opportunity to reimagine and build a more just, resilient, and sustainable future.

The 2030 Agenda is a call to action for all countries, regardless of their economic status, to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. It recognizes that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while fighting climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. Successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires collective efforts, innovation, and continued commitment to the principles of sustainability and equity.

This article explores how schools can be integrated into the requirements of the UN 2030 Agenda, focusing on sustainability, fighting poverty, and reducing inequalities. Through an analysis of educational practices and school policies, it seeks to demonstrate the transformative role of education in achieving the SDGs and building a more sustainable and equitable future for all and aims to analyze the role of schools in the implementation of the requirements of the UN 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on promoting sustainability, eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities. Through a review of educational practices and school policies, the article seeks to demonstrate how educational institutions can be transformative agents in the construction of a more just, equitable and sustainable society, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the production of this study was bibliographic research, carried out in a virtual environment, with articles available and e-books on reliable websites, with scientific content.

Bibliographic research, or research of secondary sources, encompasses all bibliography already made public in relation to the subject of study, from individual publications, bulletins, newspapers, magazines, books, research, monographs, theses, cartographic material, etc. [...] Thus, bibliographic research is not a mere repetition of what has already been said or written about a certain subject, but rather provides the examination of a theme under a new approach or approach, reaching innovative conclusions (Lakatos, Marconi, 2010, p.166). Thus, articles and e-books resulting from research in a virtual environment were selected, with the descriptors: Education, Sustainability, School, Poverty.

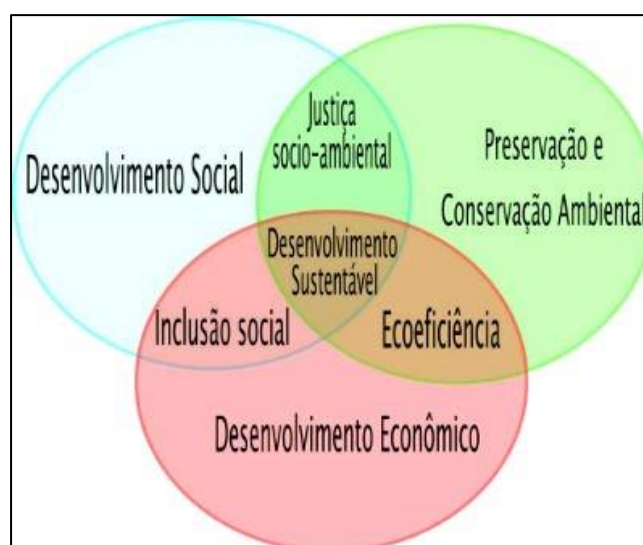
Articles that did not correlate with the descriptors were excluded. After exclusion, an analytical reading was made that resulted in the theoretical foundation of this study, presented in results and discussions and subdivided into titles.

The conclusions, including some proposals and the authors' impressions, can be found in the final considerations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AND BRAZIL'S EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda represent a global commitment to address fundamental challenges affecting humanity and the planet. In Brazil's educational context, these goals offer a framework for promoting meaningful change in the education system, addressing critical issues such as inequality, poverty, and sustainability.



Source: Todamatéria



## QUALITY EDUCATION (SDG 4) IN BRAZIL

SDG 4 seeks to "ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In Brazil, the pursuit of quality education faces several challenges, including regional disparity, inadequate infrastructure, and inequality of access.

### REGIONAL DISPARITY AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions, and this geographical vastness is reflected in significant inequalities in the quality of education offered in different regions. Regions such as the North and Northeast face greater difficulties compared to the Southeast and South, both in terms of financial resources and school infrastructure. According to the Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP), the dropout rate is higher in the North and Northeast regions, exacerbating educational inequality.

### INFRASTRUCTURE AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

School infrastructure in Brazil varies widely, with many public schools facing a lack of basic resources such as libraries, science and technology labs, and adequate spaces for physical activity. School Census reports indicate that many schools still lack access to the internet, which is essential for modern education and digital inclusion.

### POVERTY REDUCTION (SDG 1) THROUGH EDUCATION

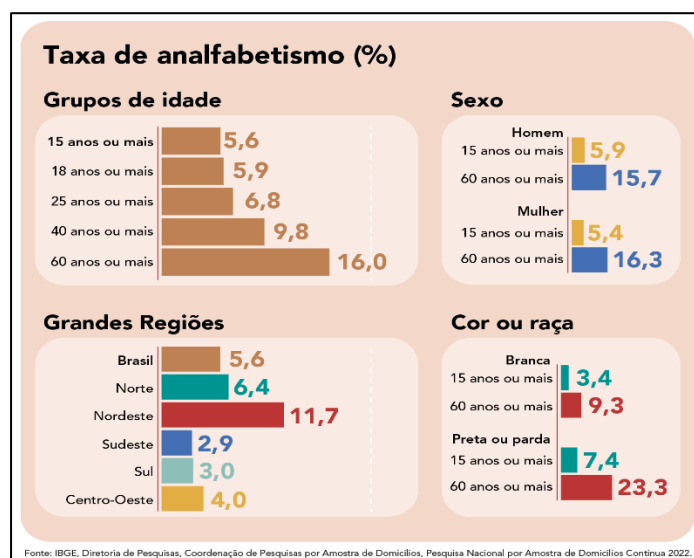
The eradication of poverty (SDG 1) is directly linked to the provision of quality education. Education is one of the most effective means to break the cycle of poverty, providing children and youth with the skills and knowledge they need to obtain better employment opportunities and contribute to economic development.

### SOCIAL SUPPORT AND INCLUSION PROGRAMS

Initiatives such as the Bolsa Família Program have played an important role in keeping children in school by offering financial support to low-income families. These programs, combined with public education policies, help reduce school dropouts and ensure that more children complete their basic education.

## REDUCING INEQUALITIES (SDG 10) IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

SDG 10 aims to reduce inequality within and between countries, and in Brazil, this includes the fight for equitable education. Educational inequality in Brazil is a complex issue, reflecting socioeconomic, racial, and gender differences.



Source: IBGE Educa 2022

## INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

To reduce inequalities, it is crucial that Brazilian schools adopt inclusive practices that respect and value diversity. This includes adapting curricula to reflect the country's cultural diversity, implementing anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, and offering additional support to students with special needs. Promoting gender equality in schools, encouraging the equal participation of girls and boys in all activities, is essential to combat gender inequality.

## SUSTAINABILITY IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT (SDGS 13, 14 AND 15)

Sustainability is a cross-cutting theme that permeates several SDGs, including combating climate change (SDG 13), conserving life below sea (SDG 14) and preserving life on land (SDG 15). In the educational context, promoting sustainability involves integrating environmental education into school curricula and encouraging sustainable practices in schools.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

The inclusion of environmental education in Brazilian schools aims to sensitize students about the importance of conserving natural resources and sustainability. School projects such as community gardens, recycling programs, and environmental awareness campaigns help create a culture of



sustainability among students. Additionally, schools that adopt sustainable practices, such as the efficient use of energy and water, serve as positive examples for the community. Brazil's educational context presents significant challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda. By focusing on promoting quality education, eradicating poverty, and reducing inequalities, Brazil can make significant progress toward a more just, equitable, and sustainable society. Schools play a key role in this process, acting as agents of change that can transform the reality of millions of children and young people, providing them with a better and more promising future.

### **About 70% of Brazilian cities are classified as having a low level of sustainable development**

Sustainable development is a significant challenge for Brazilian cities. Recent data indicate that about 70% of municipalities in Brazil are classified as having a low level of sustainable development. This classification is based on several indicators that assess economic, social and environmental aspects.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

The Sustainable Development of Cities Index (IDSC-BR), developed by the Sustainable Cities Institute, is an important tool for assessing the progress of Brazilian municipalities in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This index considers a series of indicators such as health, education, infrastructure, waste management, air quality, among others.

## HEALTH & EDUCATION

Health and education are two fundamental pillars of sustainable development. Many Brazilian cities still face significant challenges in these areas. The lack of adequate infrastructure, qualified professionals, and financial resources limits access to quality health services and education. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), many cities have deficits in hospitals, schools and trained professionals.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND BASIC SANITATION

Inadequate infrastructure is another factor contributing to the low level of sustainable development. Many cities lack efficient sanitation, water supply, and waste management systems. According to the National Sanitation Information System (SNIS), about 50% of the Brazilian population does not have access to treated sewage services, and solid waste collection is still a challenge in many regions.

## AIR QUALITY AND POLLUTION

Air pollution is a growing problem in Brazilian cities, especially in large metropolises. The high concentration of vehicles, industries, and other economic activities contribute to the deterioration of air





quality. Studies by the Institute of Energy and Environment (IEMA) show that most Brazilian cities do not meet the air quality standards recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

## INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Despite the challenges, several initiatives are underway to improve sustainable development in Brazilian cities. Sustainable urbanization projects, promotion of renewable energies, improvement of sanitation infrastructure and environmental education campaigns are some of the actions undertaken.

## SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION PROJECTS

Many cities are adopting sustainable urbanization practices, such as creating green spaces, improving public transportation, and promoting sustainable urban mobility. Examples include the implementation of bike lanes, bike-sharing programs, and improvements to mass transit infrastructure.

## RENEWABLE ENERGIES

The promotion of renewable energy is crucial to reducing the environmental footprint of cities. Incentive programs for the installation of solar panels and investments in wind energy are gaining ground. According to the National Electric Energy Agency (ANEEL), Brazil has great potential to expand its clean energy generation capacity.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education campaigns have been instrumental in raising awareness among the population about the importance of sustainable development. Programs in schools and communities aim to teach sustainable practices such as recycling, saving water and energy, and the importance of environmental conservation.

The sustainable development of Brazilian cities faces significant challenges, reflected in the classification of about 70% of municipalities as having a low level of sustainable development. However, initiatives and policies aimed at improving infrastructure, promoting renewable energy, and environmental education are underway and offer hope for a more sustainable future. Progress will require a concerted effort by governments, the private sector, and civil society to overcome obstacles and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.



Source: GOV.Br

## TOWARDS EDUCATION 2030: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INCHEON DECLARATION

The Incheon Declaration is based on several key principles:

- **Education as a Human Right:** Education is reaffirmed as a fundamental human right and a public good essential to the exercise of all other human rights. "Education is a human right that is essential to the exercise of all other human rights. It promotes individual freedom and empowerment and generates important benefits for development" (UNESCO, 2015).
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensuring that no one is left behind is a core commitment. This involves focusing on marginalized and vulnerable groups to reduce disparities in education. "We must ensure equitable and inclusive access to quality education for all, especially for the most vulnerable" (UNESCO, 2015).
- **Quality and Lifelong Learning:** Promote education that is relevant, of high quality and provides lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education should be tailored to the needs of students and society, promoting life and work skills. "Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities are key to achieving a more just and inclusive society" (UNESCO, 2015).

## EDUCATION GOALS AND TARGETS 2030

The Incheon Declaration specifies clear targets for achieving quality education by 2030, as outlined in SDG 4. These goals include:

- **Early Childhood Education:** Universal and free access to quality early childhood education.
- **Primary and Secondary Education:** Completion of free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education with relevant learning outcomes.



- **Technical and Vocational Education:** Equal access to affordable, quality technical, vocational, and higher education.
- **Literacy and Numeracy:** Ensure that all young people and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- **Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments:** Build and improve educational facilities that are sensitive to children's needs, disabilities and gender, and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

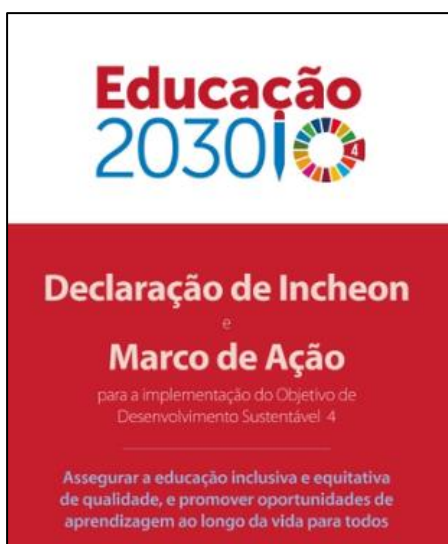
## IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The Incheon Declaration also underlines the importance of effective implementation and continuous monitoring to achieve the set goals. UNESCO and its partner organizations play a crucial role in coordinating and providing technical support to countries in the implementation of education goals. "It is critical that governments, with the support of the international community, monitor progress and evaluate education policies and practices to ensure that all goals are met" (UNESCO, 2015).

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Implementing the Education 2030 vision presents significant challenges, including persistent inequalities, conflict, climate change, and the need for sustainable financing for education. However, the Incheon Declaration also offers a unique opportunity to transform education systems globally by promoting innovation, international cooperation, and inclusive policies that ensure that all children and young people receive a quality education.

The Incheon Declaration represents a milestone in the global commitment to quality education for all. It sets out a comprehensive vision to transform education by 2030, emphasizing equity, inclusion, and lifelong learning. By adhering to these principles and targets, countries can make significant progress in creating education systems that empower individuals and promote more just and sustainable societies. "The Incheon Declaration is a call to action for all countries, encouraging renewed collaboration and concerted efforts to ensure quality education for all by 2030" (UNESCO, 2015).



Source: UNESCO

## CONCLUSION

The role of schools in implementing the requirements of the UN 2030 Agenda is vital for promoting a sustainable, equitable and just future. By analyzing Brazil's educational context, we identified significant challenges, such as regional disparity, inadequate infrastructure, and inequality of access. However, we also see valuable opportunities to transform education and, by extension, Brazilian society.

The Incheon Declaration and the Sustainable Development Goals provide a robust framework to guide education policies and practices. A focus on quality education (SDG 4), poverty eradication (SDG 1) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) are key to achieving sustainable development. Successful implementation of these goals requires an integrated approach that involves governments, schools, communities, and other stakeholders. The challenges in Brazil, such as the lack of adequate infrastructure and inequality in access to education, are significant. However, initiatives such as sustainable urbanization, the promotion of renewable energy, and environmental education offer promising avenues for progress. Sustainable urbanization projects, investments in clean energy, and environmental awareness programs have the potential to transform not only cities, but also mindsets, promoting a culture of sustainability from the educational base.

Schools play a crucial role as agents of change. They have the ability to influence the next generation by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address global challenges effectively. Educational programmes that promote sustainability, social inclusion and the reduction of inequality are essential to building a fairer and more resilient society. Therefore, continued commitment to the principles and targets of the 2030 Agenda is critical. Investing in education is investing in the future of the planet and its populations, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to thrive in a more sustainable and inclusive world. Through collaboration, innovation, and dedication, we can



transform the Brazilian educational landscape and contribute significantly to the global sustainable development goals.

The continuation of this commitment implies concrete and sustained actions over time. In order for Brazilian schools to effectively fulfill their role in the realization of the 2030 Agenda, it is necessary that several strategies are implemented in a coordinated and effective manner. One of the main needs is the strengthening of public policies aimed at education. Governments at all levels should prioritize adequate funding of schools, ensuring that they have sufficient resources to provide quality education. This includes investments in infrastructure, educational technology, teacher training, and curriculum development aligned with sustainability principles.

In addition, it is essential to implement policies that promote equity and inclusion. Programs that offer specific support to students from vulnerable groups, such as scholarships, school meals, and transportation, are essential to ensure that all students have the same opportunities to succeed.

Collaboration between diverse sectors of society is vital to the success of the 2030 Agenda. Partnerships between governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and local communities can leverage the resources and expertise needed to address educational challenges. Community projects, private social responsibility initiatives, and international cooperation programs can provide additional support to schools.

The integration of innovation and technology into the educational environment is another crucial strategy. Digital technologies and innovative teaching methods can significantly improve the quality of education and make it more accessible. Digital training programs for teachers and students, as well as the implementation of online learning platforms, are examples of how technology can be used to promote quality education. To ensure that the goals of the 2030 Agenda are being achieved, a robust monitoring and evaluation system is essential. Clear and objective indicators should be established to measure progress, and periodic reports should be prepared to identify areas of success and points that need improvement. This process allows for ongoing adjustments to strategies and policies, ensuring that efforts are always aligned with established goals.

Awareness-raising and social mobilization are important components for the success of sustainable development in education. Awareness campaigns that involve parents, students, and the wider community can increase support for educational initiatives and foster a culture of valuing education. Community events, lectures, and school activities that discuss topics such as sustainability, equity, and active citizenship are effective ways to engage the population.

In short, commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals requires a collective and continuous effort. Brazilian schools are at the heart of this transformation, playing a crucial role in the formation of citizens who are aware and prepared for the challenges of the future. Through



robust public policies, strategic partnerships, technological innovation, effective monitoring, and social mobilization, it is possible to make significant progress in building a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable education system. The realization of this vision will enable Brazil not only to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda, but also to establish itself as an example of commitment to global sustainable development.



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